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DEPT FOR DS/DSS/OSAC AND DS/IP/WHA
OTTAWA FOR RSO AND FCS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC AMGT APER

SUBJECT: OSAC CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT 2008 - TORONTO

II. (U) Overall Crime and Safety Situation: The Crime and safety situation in Toronto is comparable to or better than in many of the larger cities in the United States.

IA. Crime in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) during 2008 mirrored most major U.S. cities in variety though not frequency as the crime rate is significantly lower than most major U.S. cities. Further, violent crime in the GTA is mostly isolated to those involved in drug, gang and organized crime related activities. For example, the GTA is made up of five regions that include; Toronto, Peel, York, Durham and Halton. The current population is approximately 5,500,000. In the GTA during 2008 there were just 104 homicides, a number which has steadily declined over the past four years.

IB. Traffic in Toronto overwhelms the streets and continues to grow. Consequently, we continue to observe vehicular/ pedestrian related fatalities.

II. (U) Political Violence:

IA. Historical Perspective: Toronto is an extremely diverse city with some fifty percent of its population being composed of foreign born citizens and/or third country nationals. The diverse nature of the population coupled with the metro area's expanse has resulted in well organized ethnic communities throughout the area.

IB. Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime:

1. The number of suspects still facing charges for the "Toronto 18" summer 2006 terror plots was reduced to 10, after an Ontario Superior Court justice found a Toronto-area man guilty in September, 2008 of terrorism charges stemming from the "Toronto 18" plots. (Earlier, in April 2008, Canadian government prosecutors stayed terrorism-related charges against four suspects in order to focus charges on the suspects who appear to be most directly involved in the "Toronto 18" plots, and away from more tangential figures, according to law enforcement contacts. Judges had also previously stayed charges against three minors in the group in July 2007.) The September court ruling was Canada's first conviction under its Anti-Terrorism Act and makes convictions more likely for the 10 defendants still awaiting trial. Their trial dates have not been announced, and in December, the Ontario Court of Appeal rejected one suspect's request to review a lower court decision to deny bail.

2. Organized crime is a concern. Although not apparent, the GTA is directly impacted by activities that include but are not limited to the distribution of illegal narcotics, bank/wire fraud and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) violations. Often times, these crimes are the means used to raise funds for gangs or international terrorism.

3C. International or Transnational Terrorism: There are no known specific terrorist threats directed against official or private U.S. citizens in Ontario; however, many groups exist in Canada that have ties to, illegally raise funds for, or are sympathetic with various well-known international terrorist organizations.

4D. Civil Unrest: Although the GTA sees numerous demonstrations each year, most if not all were peaceful during 2008.

III. (U) Post Specific Concerns: Gun violence continues to be a concern in the GTA. Although gun related crimes are not as frequent as in major U.S. cities and are mostly isolated to drug, gang and

organized crime related activities, innocent bystanders have become victims.

IV. (U) Police Response & Medical Emergencies:

The Toronto Police Service and suburban police services have been proactive in addressing criminal activity in the GTA. Officers generally respond to the scene of crimes in a timely manner. Police agencies and emergency medical services in the Toronto area have 9-1-1 capability, which has proven highly effective in those rare instances when members of the U.S. Mission have called 9-1-1 for police or emergency services.

Routine and emergency requests for police assistance from the Regional Security Officer in Toronto have been met with an excellent response by the Toronto Police Service and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The working relationship between the RSO office, five resident law enforcement agencies and the Canadian law enforcement community is excellent.

IV. (U) Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim:

Residents and visitors in the Toronto area are advised to take the same security precautions they would in any major U.S. city. This requires residents and travelers to periodically re-evaluate their daily activities to reduce the chance of victimization.

Specific Recommendations:

- 11.** Keep a photocopy of your passport biographical page in a separate location. This can facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen.
- 12.** Keep valuables such as cash and jewelry in a secure location. Additionally, avoid displaying large sums of money in public.
- 13.** Store valuables in a lockable safe or in safety deposit boxes.
- 14.** Prior to traveling, register your travel plans with the U.S. State Department's Consular Services and/ or share your travel plans and contact information with a friend or colleague.

VI. (U) Emergency Contact Information - GTA:

Toronto Police Service - (416) 808-2222

Royal Canadian Mounted Police - (800) 387-0020 (GTA)

Ontario Provincial Police - (888) 310-1122 (Ontario, outside GTA area)

In the event of an emergency, travelers should first contact 9-1-1 as necessary. Otherwise, they may contact the U.S. Consulate General 24-hours a day at (416) 595-1700 to speak with a duty officer or contact the Regional Security Officer, Mark C. Malhojt at (416) 595-6502 or malhojtmc@state.gov.

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